

REMARKS

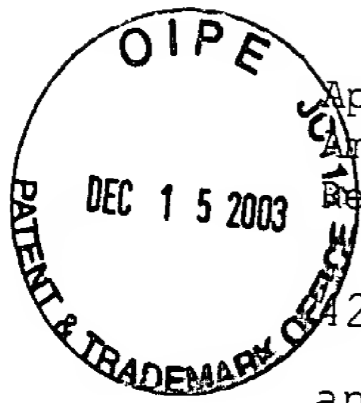
Claims 1-32 are pending in the application. Claims 6,8,15,16,17, and 22 have been amended to correct minor informalities. No new matter has been added by these changes.

Claims 1-3, 10-22, and 24-32 have been rejected as obvious over WO 99/27067, claims 4-6 have been rejected as obvious over WO 99/27067 in view of U.S. 5,516,448 (Capeci), and claims 7-9 have been rejected as obvious over WO 99/27067 in view of WO 99/24547. Applicants respectfully traverse.

Applicants file with this amendment the verified translation of applicants' priority application DE 198 51 426, filed 9 November 1998 in the German patent office. This translated application establishes that applicants were in possession of their invention as presently claimed before the 3 June 1999 effective date of WO 99/27067 as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a). Having eliminated the primary reference of all pending rejections as prior art against their claims, applicants respectfully ask that the rejections not be maintained and that their application be passed to issue.

CONCLUSION

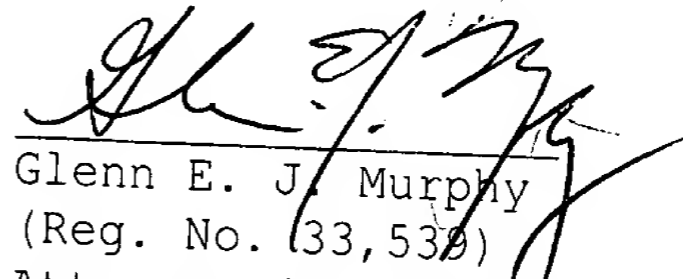
In view of the amendments and remarks above, applicants ask for reconsideration and allowance of the claims. Applicants also ask for extension of the period for response two months to January 13, 2004, and authorize a charge to Deposit Account No. 01-1250 in the amount of \$



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\$420.00 for the extension fee. Order No. 03-0563. Should any fees be due that have not been accounted for, the Commissioner is authorized to charge them to Deposit Account No. 01-1250.

Respectfully submitted,


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